it not be the perfume of her own bridal bouquet, the carnations which she had carried that night? But then the child stirred, and Christopha roused a little, and, after all, the sense of the flowers in the room was the sense of the little one in her arms. As if many things mean one thing.

It was toward dawn that the end came, quite simply and with no manner of finality, as if one were to pass into another chamber. And after that, as quickly as might be, Christopha and Allen made ready to drive back to the village for the last bitter business of all.

Allen, in the barn with Jacob, wondered what he must do. Allen was sore hearted at his loss, grateful for the charge that he had been given; but what was he to do? The child ought not to stay in Jacob's cottage. If Chris' mother would take him for a little—but Allen knew, without at all being able to define it, her plaintive, burdened manner—the burdened manner of the irresponsible. Still puzzling over this, he brought the cutter to the side door; and the side door opened, and Chris came out in the pale light, leading the little boy—awake, warmly wrapped, ready for the ride.

"Where you goin' to take him to, Chrissie?" Allen asked breathlessly.

"Some of the neighbors, I guess, ain't we?" she answered. "I dunno. I thought we could see. He mustn't be left here—now."

"No, that's so, ain't it?" said Allen, only. "He mustn't."

The three drove out together into the land lying about the gate of dawn. A fragment of moon was in the east. There was about the hour something primitive, as if, in this loneliest of all the hours, the world reverted to type, remembered ancient savage differences, and fell in the primal lines.

"Allen," Chris said, "you'll miss her. I mean miss knowin' she's alive."

"Yes," the boy said, "I'll miss knowin' she's alive."

"Well, we must try to settle what to do with the little boy," she suggested hastily.

"Yes," he assented, "that's right. We've got to settle that," and at this fell silent.

"There's Hopkins'," Chris said presently, nodding toward the home of the neighbor who had waited their coming to Jacob's cottage. "But she'll hev to be over there lots today and tomorrow. And she was kep' up so late it don't hardly seem as if we ought to stop and ask her."

"No," Allen said, "I dunno as it does, really."

"There's Cripps'," she suggested a little farther on, "but they ain't up yet. I donno's 'twould do to rouse 'em up."

"No," Allen agreed, "best not do that, I guess."

Christopha looked over the great fields.

"My!" she said, "you'll miss her—miss thinkin' of her bein' somewheres. Allen! Where do you s'pose she is?"

"I thought o' that," said Allen, soberly.

"Goodness!" said Christopha, and shivered, and suddenly drew the child close to her. He was sleeping again. And it was so, with his little body between them, that she could no longer keep her hand warm in Allen's great coat pocket. But above the child's head her eyes and Allen's would meet, and in that hour the two had never been so near. Nearer they were than in the talk about the new house, and the presents and the dinners and suppers and breakfasts together.

They passed the farmhouses that looked asleep, and the farm houses that looked watchfully awake while their owners slept. It would not be well to knock at these, still and somber windowed. And though there were lights at the Moneys' and at the Howells' and at the Hubbelthwait farm, and even at Bess and Opie's, their gates, by common consent, were also passed. Nor did they stop at the Topladys'.

"They're real, regular people with a grown son," Chris said of them vaguely, "and it don't seem hardly fair to give 'em little John, too!"

"Little John," Allen said overwhelmingly. When they called him that the child seemed suddenly a person, like themselves. Their eyes met above his head.

"Allen!" Chris said.

"What? What is it?" he asked eagerly.

"Could—do you think—could we?" she demanded.

"My!" he answered, "I been a-wishin'—"

Involuntarily he drew rein. They were on the rise by the corner church at the edge of the village. The village, rhythmic crest of wall and shallow of fawn, lay below them, and near the little Triangle park would be their waiting house.

"Did you mean have him live with us?" Allen made sure.

"Yes, I did," Chris said, "if we had the money."

"Well!" said the boy, "well, I guess that'll be all right!"

"How much she'd of liked it," said Chris.

"Wouldn't she, though?" Allen assented; "wouldn't she? And you heard what she said—that about keepin' him from bein'—wicked? Chrissie—could we, you and me? This little fellow?" Chris lifted her face and nodded.

"I ain't afraid," she said simply.

"I ain't either," her husband said.

As if, in this new future there were less need of fear than in the future which had sought to "try to be happy and keep ourselves happy."

They looked down where their house would be, near the gate of the coming dawn. And—as two others in such case might have seen—it was as if they were the genii of their own mysterious future, a future whose solution trembled very near. For with the charge of the child had come a courage, even as the dead woman had known, when she thought of her charge of Allen, that she was not afraid to die.

"Allen," said Chris, stumblingly, "It don't seem as if we could get like the Howells' an' the Hubblethwaits' and them. Somehow it don't seem as if we could!"

"No," said Allen, "we couldn't. That's so, ain't it?"

Above little John's head their eyes met in a kind of new betrothal, new marriage, new birth. But when he would have driven on, Allen pulled at the reins again, and, "Chrissie," he said, suddenly, "if afterwards—there should be anybody—else. I mean for us. Would—would you keep on lovin' this little kiddie, too?"

She met his eyes bravely, sweetly.

"Well, you silly," she said, "of course I would."

At which Allen laughed joyously, confidently.

"Why, Chris," he cried, "we married. For always an' always. An' here's this little old man to see to. Who's afraid?"

Then they kissed each other above the head of the sleeping child and drove on toward the village and toward their waiting house.

An Unexpected Role

By Mary Bream

Mrs. Emily Hilton laughed in an embarrassed way. "Wait till Bessie comes home from her finishing school," she said. "Then, Mr. Raymond, you will appreciate us more."

It really was embarrassing, for Mrs. Hilton, at thirty-eight, was still an uncommonly pretty woman. Her husband had been dead five years. He had left her an annuity of $1,200, which was ample for the village, and one daughter, now eighteen years old.

George Raymond was thirty-five. He had sttled in the little place a year before and opened a law office, which was flourishing, as law offices do in country villages where litigious rich men exist. And Mrs. Hilton was conscious against her will that she was falling in love with a man three or four years her junior.

He was a frequent visitor at the Hilton home, but he had never met Bessie. And Mrs. Hilton was determined that he should never tell her he cared for her until he had at least met the girl.

In due time Bessie came home, ready for the game of life, her pretty head full of shallow nonsense. She was a blonde, in striking contradistinction to her mother. She was frivolous, joyous, and altogether insincere.

But what is insincerity in the balance with youth and freshness? Emily Hilton found herself, to her horror, a rival with her daughter for the young man's affection. And, what both troubled and yet pleased her—troubled her as a woman and pleased her as a mother—George Raymond was undeniably becoming infatuated with Bessie.

She watched the progress of the little affair, and, if she was unselfish enough to be glad for Bessie's sake, for George was a man of standing in the community already, she was sorry for his. In time he would discover what she herself had long known, that there was not an unselfish thought in her daughter's empty head. However, as things were going, she was simply being swept down the current; and she could detect a sort of filial respect in the way George spoke to her.

Bessie's callers were numerous, girls and young men. It was on a particular moonlight evening, when Bessie and a girl friend were munching chocolates together in the little summer house that Emily Hilton was an unwilling hearer of what passed.

She had not meant to listen; but, when she began to overhear she remained rooted to the spot in strong disgust.

"My dearest Tess, I have not the slightest intention of marrying George Raymond," said Bessie.

"But everybody thinks you are going to," protested her friend, helping herself from the box.

"I know it. "Well? I've never had a proposal in my life, and I meant George to be the first. That's why I am leading him on."

"Bessie!" interposed her friend shocked, yet wondering.

"That's what I'm doing. I tell you, I have that man at the end of a nice long string. He thinks he has only go to ask me and he'll get me. But I mean to have some fun out of life, with mamma so easy-going, and I'm going to break a dozen hearts at least before I make my choice."

"But is it fair to George?"

"I hope so. But I don't care if it isn't. Listen, Tess! I only wish you could hear when he proposes. I've got him so that I can make him do it any time I want to. When he looks like beginning I'm going to lure him on and listen with downcast eyes and blushing face, and then, as soon as he has finished, I am going to look him straight in the eye and say: 'Nothing doing, George!' Just like that."

"You'll get a reputation as a flirt."

"I don't care. Other girls do the same thing. Besides, you know we haven't much money, and how am I going to get gifts and things unless the men give them to me? Now George gave me this box of candy. Well, I've got two others fellows on the lead, too. Oh, Tess, if only you could see the fun! George is coming tonight."

"My dear—"

"Have you good ears, Tess? Why don't you go when he comes, and sit on the piazza behind the locust tree?"

"I will, then. But, O Bessie—"

Emily Hilton turned away, sick with disgust. It was growing darker as the moon waned. That was why she did not recognize George Raymond till she almost bumped into him, and did not at first know that he had heard.

Whatever George had heard, and how much, he gave no sign of it half an hour later when he made his way toward Bessie in the summerhouse. He carried another box of chocolates done up in pink ribbon, which he bestowed upon the giggling girl. Five minutes afterward Tess, who had seized the opportunity to depart, sat on the piazza, straining her ears to catch the words of the lover and her friend's answers.

After a while she heard George say, in a low voice:

"Bessie—Bessie, dear, there is something that I have wanted to say to you for a long time. But it takes courage, and somehow I have not dared to mention it. It means such a change in your life, Bessie."

"What is it, Mr. Raymond?" Tess heard Bessie answer very softly.

George Raymond seemed to hesitate. "I am not sure even now that I ought to tell you," he said. "But I am sure that you must have guessed something of my feelings, and seen by my attentions—"

"Go on!" said Bessie, in a tone just calculated to reach the ears of her friend.

"Well," said George, with a laugh of embarrassment, "the fact is that I love—I want to marry—" He broke off, stammering.

Bessie Hilton suddenly raised her voice loudly.

"I understand now, and I am sorry," she said. "But you ought never to have imagined such a thing was possible. Why, you are old enough to be my father. My feeling for you has never been anything but sisterly, even daughterly. Why, you are old enough to marry my mother. Go and ask her, if you must get married," said the girl, with biting scorn.

"Why, Bessie—"

"It is useless, Mr. Raymond. You mean nothing to me at all."

"You entirely misunderstand me," retorted George, just as loudly. "What I wished to announce to you was this: your mother, to whom you have referred me, has just promised to become my wife, and I was trying to break the fact that you are going to have a stepfather—and guardian," he added, meaningly.

Tess, on the piazza, caught her breath. Then, hysterical with mirth, she crept away, just as the shamed and weeping girl rushed by.

Upstairs Emily Hilton heard nothing of this. She was in her bedroom, sobbing softly from happiness.